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ABSTRACT

This action research study examines student reactions to a sixty-hour community service graduate requirement at an all-girl, Catholic high school; identifies reasons for the apathy and disdain with which students view the requirement; and suggests creating a service learning environment that will increase students' investment and interest in participating in service projects by making curricular connections to the community service. The perceptions and attitudes of 80 tenth grade students towards the community service requirement were gauged through conversations, a review of journal reflections, and surveys. Results suggested that students felt that the requirement was an imposition that had little to do with their classes or high school career. In order to challenge this position, the researcher introduced service learning into the classroom by scheduling weekly discussions of community hopes and concerns and encouraging students to interact with the community. Service learning is intended to challenge and change status quo rather than reinforce inequalities in place through disconnected service projects, and it allowed students to chose projects, such as neighborhood cleanups, that related to both their curriculum and their community. This resulted in an enthusiasm that appeared to bring more understanding of the need for a service graduation requirement. (Includes 3 appendices, 4 charts, 9 tables, and 30 references.) (MO)

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THE CURRICULAR CONNECTION TO SERVICE LEARNING

Maria T. Gonsiorek

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight

Field-Based Master's Program

Chicago, Illinois

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ABSTRACT

Students at the targeted high school consistently expressed apathy and disdain for the sixty-hour community service graduation requirement. The purpose of this action research was to explore why students reacted this way and the possibilities for curriculum redesign. The study highlighted in particular the perceptions and attitudes of tenth grade students as they participated in a service learning curriculum. The study was conducted during the period of September through December 2002 and included 80 participants (ages 15-16).

One factor influencing students' lack of interest in community service is the lack of curricular connections (Burns, 1998; Hill & Pope, 1997; Masucci & Renner, 2001). According to Hill and Pope (1997) community service is not the same as service learning. In contrast, service learning requires a curricular connection. Masucci and Renner (2001) added that service learning is intended to challenge and change status quo rather than reinforce inequalities in place through disconnected service projects.

A review of solution strategies suggested within the literature, combined with an analysis of the setting, resulted in the selection of service learning as an intervention strategy. Data were collected using document analysis, surveys, and journals.

Postintervention data indicated a strong connection between the incorporation of service learning in the classroom and the increase of students' investment and interest in participating in service projects. Students enjoyed the sense of responsibility and ownership they experienced with the service learning program. Students' enthusiasm has appeared to bring more understanding to the need for a service graduation requirement.

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I wish to express a tremendous amount of gratitude for the input and cooperation of my World History classes. Without them this would not have been possible.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us.

We ask ourselves,

Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small doesn't save the world.

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking

So that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us.

It's in everyone.

As we let our light shine,

We give other people permission to do the same;

As we're liberated from our own fear,

Our presence automatically liberates others.

~Nelson Mandela~

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my parents.

Thank you for instilling in your children the importance of getting a good education

so that we could have more opportunities in life.

It is because of your lifetime of hard work, sacrifice, and support

that I have had the opportunity to complete this program.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

There is a strong focus on community service at the targeted school site. However, students consistently express apathy and disdain for the sixty-hour graduation requirement. Evidence for the existence of this problem includes conversations with students, a review of their journal reflections, the percentage of students who wait until their senior year to begin their program, and the number of seniors who delay completion of their service requirements unless a policy is enforced that results in the removal of their school privileges (e.g., senior prom, graduation, and other special events). The purpose of this study was to explore why students react this way and the possibilities for curriculum redesign. The study highlighted in particular the perceptions and attitudes of tenth grade students as they participated in a curriculum that integrates service learning.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted high school site is a private, progressive, women's, Catholic secondary school. Built in 1962, the core program focuses on a non-tracked, college preparatory curriculum that includes thirteen courses targeted for advanced placement and four interdisciplinary options. The targeted site challenges all students and faculty to excel through

an annual portfolio process and review. The two-story, 60-classroom building is wired with Internet-ready computers in all classrooms. The facilities also offer two state-of-the-art science labs, four computer labs, a computer assisted design lab, media center, chapel, retreat center, three interdisciplinary classrooms, library, a fitness and dance center, and newly renovated gymnasium. The targeted site is defined by its dedication to justice, compassion, community, partnership, and truth. Students are exposed to a rich high school experience through 30 clubs and organizations, cultural awareness and harmony building activities, competitive sports program, theatre, music, art, and dance.

The staff of the targeted site includes 86 employees (76 full-time and 10 part-time). Of these 86 members, 58 are teaching personnel. In addition, there are four administrators, four deans, five guidance counselors, and a full-time nurse, all of whom are female. The school is led through a President/Principal model dividing fiscal and faculty/student responsibilities, respectively. Four curriculum coordinators work with specific departments at each level. The student-teacher ratio is 20:1 and is designed to provide a stronger focus on students' individual needs. Fifty-three percent of the teachers have taught at the targeted site for less than five years, and approximately one-third have taught for ten or more years. The average daily attendance for faculty members is nearly 99%. The targeted site holds its faculty annually accountable to high professional standards through a goal conference and supervisor observations, peer observations, a portfolio reflection process, certificate renewal, and a review of each teacher's outcome-based curriculum aligned with state standards and cross-curricular connections on each level. All faculty members are encouraged to continue their education through seminars and coursework, and are required to earn graduate hours every three years. Thirty percent of the faculty has earned a bachelors' degree, 66% has earned a masters' degree, and four percent received a

doctorate degree. Eighty-nine percent of the faculty is Catholic and fully participate in prayer services and all-school liturgies. The ethnic background of the faculty is as follows: 92% White, 4% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 1% Asian.

The total student population of nearly 1,100 comprises one of the largest all-female, Catholic high schools in the nation. The majority of these students come from predominantly low to middle class, blue-collar neighborhoods. Most students, 91%, are Catholic reflecting the identity of the school. The ethnic identity of the students is as follows: 66% White, 21% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 5% other. The student body exhibits a greater diversity than the local community since 70% of the students come from the rich mosaic of the larger metropolitan area, 22% from the surrounding suburbs, and only 8% from the local community. Over 170 private and public grade schools and 98 different parishes feed into the student population. Although most of the students travel in from the city, the targeted site proudly reports a 95% average daily student attendance.

In 1993, the targeted site instituted a service graduation requirement to reflect the mission and spirit of the school community. The service program was created with these student goals in mind: accept new challenges, enhance self-esteem, deepen the understanding of their faith, reinforce the curriculum, explore interests and talents, and learn to work well with others. During the 2000-2001 school year, students contributed more than 15,200 hours of service to the community. This graduation condition requires all students to complete 60 hours of service, site evaluations, and a reflection journal. Students also have the option of participating in a service panel to give witness to their experiences. All service hours and forms should be completed prior to second semester of their senior year. Failure to fulfill any part of the service requirement results in the removal of special commencement activities such as senior prom and graduation.

The Surrounding Community

The targeted site is centrally located in a small, four square mile suburban community on the outskirts of a large metropolitan city. This suburb of 27,600 residents was incorporated in 1970 in response to the growing population moving away from the city. This relatively new residential neighborhood is located near a highly industrialized area that provides much of the employment for the community. The average family income is $41,602 annually. This suburb has one of the lowest tax rates in the area and attracts a variety of people from a low to middle socioeconomic status. The ethnic makeup of the community, however, has very little diversity with a White population of 94%; the ethnic majorities include those of Polish (n=7,250), German (n=7,100), and Irish (n=7,100) heritage. The residents have a median age of 37 and 77% have earned at least a high school diploma.

There are two school districts in the town made up of eight public grammar schools, one public high school, and three special education cooperatives. There is also one parochial grammar school and two parochial single sex high schools (one of which is the targeted site).

National Context of the Problem

According to Moore and Sandholtz (1999), service learning is an emerging field on the rise in education. Many schools, both public and private, have included a service learning component as a graduation requirement. Maryland became the first state in the nation to mandate all students perform service in order to graduate from high school (Finney, 1997). The 1997 U.S. Department of Education reports that eighty-six percent of all sixth through twelfth grade students are required to participate in a service learning program (Black, 1997). This is due in part to the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the 1993 National Service

Trust Act that led to the federal support and funding of school service programs, as well as the development and establishment of national programs such as Americorps and Learn and Serve America (Hepburn, 1997). Schine (1997) noted that schools are turning to service to offer a true learning experience in the context of one's community. She suggested that it gives students the opportunity to grow and develop as young adults connected with society. From Socrates to John Dewey, experiential, active, or service learning teaches that one can only learn by doing. The benefits of such a philosophy of learning extend beyond simply fulfilling a graduation requirement (Schine).

The service learning programs in schools today were first developed in the early 1900's and have evolved over the last century (Hepburn, 1997). Such theorists as Arthur W. Dunn and John Dewey emphasized the need for schools and communities to connect and form relationships where learning takes place through the reality of life. Hepburn added that in the 1930's, Wilson and Hanna also recommended a greater interaction between student and society to yield to more effective classroom instruction and as a response to community needs. Jerome Bruner in 1971 criticized schools for being too detached from reality and suggested that students uncover community issues, devise plans of action, and implement their strategies.

Schine (1997) found that service learning not only brought the curriculum to life, but also gave students a sense of the importance of community and citizenship. She also suggested that personal, social, emotional, and intellectual challenges assist adolescent development and foster relationships. Through service learning students enhance their critical thinking skills, learn about diversity and their own biases, and practice effective communication through speaking and listening (Battistoni, 1997). Cummings and Winston (1998) revealed that curricular connections to service allow for independent thinking and exploration, as well as encourage creativity in the

classroom. Black (1997) added that learning (which involves making real decisions and solving real problems) provides students with a sense of responsibility and accountability. Students are empowered through service activities when they see they can make a difference. According to Schine, this occurs when trust is established and students are recognized for their accomplishments. Schine described further that service learning also addresses gaps in the school curriculum such as acquiring and testing new skills, engaging in relationships with peers and adults, and validating student experiences when they give voice to their stories. It is then that classroom learning is more authentic and tangible leading to higher student motivation, intensity, and interest (Hepburn, 1997). Students involved in service learning often gain a greater sense of compassion and respect for self, others, and the environment (Carver, 1997). Service learning can also be an opportunity for students to explore possible career interests or fields of study (Finney, 1997).

Schools may also reap the benefits of a service learning program. Cairn and Cairn (1999) acknowledged that service learning often raises the curriculum to a higher level providing ample opportunities for application and synthesis. These authors noted further that this type of higher-level thinking requires students to not only know information, but also be able to apply it to the real world. Students involved in service are not simply passive learners, but have much input to offer due to their rich field experiences (Carver, 1997). Hepburn (1997) found service learning to be powerful in its ability to make intangible ideas more practical and real. This type of education, Hepburn added, cannot be gained through the pages of a textbook. According to Cummings and Winston (1998), service learning was a natural way for schools to connect with the neighboring communities and organizations. Service learning is easy to incorporate into any discipline by effective teachers willing to connect it to their daily lesson plans (Battistoni, 1997).

Students, who may not be recognized for their scholarship or other talents in school, may find this authentic style of learning to be a positive way to get the attention and acknowledgment they desire (Schine, 1997). Black (1997) believed that schools should consider revising the academic learning program to reflect the nature of a service learning program. This revision would lead to a less competitive, self-regarding environment and a greater collaborative, supportive community (Black).

Schine (1997) discovered service learning to be an ideal way for adolescents to find adult role models within their neighborhoods creating a new sense of community. It is also a poignant way for society to acknowledge and appreciate the gifts these young adults can bring to the world, rather than simply noting the stereotypical apathy of adolescents. Cummings and Winston (1998) considered the experience of service learning an opportunity for students to resolve real world concerns in their community. This training for the future is invaluable for these future leaders (Cummings & Winston). Hepburn (1997) deemed service learning a response to a society that tends to isolate itself.

> The free time that people have is often spent with things rather than neighbors or people with similar interests in our community. The TV, VCR, radio, computer, exercise machine, and electronic toys engage people at home, often leaving them socially isolated from most of the local community. In this age of being socially disconnected, the need for experiential education in the schools may be greater than ever before. (p. 141)

Battistoni (1997) agreed that service learning moves society from isolation and hopelessness to renewal and community.

Not everyone is in favor of a service learning graduation requirement. Hepburn (1997) warned that volunteer work that is involuntary or required appears contradictory and forced. Time is also of great concern. Teachers already feel pressed for time in their curriculum without the addition of service learning (Black, 1997). Cairn and Cairn (1999) contended that schools may not desire to utilize its resources creating a service learning program that takes a great deal of time to initiate. Once initiated, each service learning program takes time to develop and become effective. Schools that look for instant results may meet disappointment and frustration (Moore & Sandholtz, 1999). Sipe (2001) maintained that some schools set up programs due to outside pressures or to claim they incorporate service learning, but all that has done is "set up programs that encouraged doing time" (p. 34). Parents may not be available to transport their children and students may need after school hours for their studies (Black, 1997). Black added that some service agencies fear the costs of liability or take advantage of adolescents by placing them in menial jobs. Thomas (1997) pessimistically criticized the effectiveness of a service learning program:

> ...Excuse me if I don't join the Hallelujah Chorus over three hundred high school kids set loose on the community, blindly colliding, if only momentarily, with real people living real lives. Those lives keep going long after the kids have reduced them to a line on a college application. (p. 16)

Sipe added that although experience is a teacher, not all experiences can be ones filled with learning. Black argued that it should be the student's decision to participate in service, not a school directive.

Not all service learning programs are created equal. This move toward service requires greater research to reveal what makes an effective service program that is beneficial to the student, school, and community. Service learning programs set up through optional outside activities often do not have strong curricular connections and lose their impact (Moore & Sandholtz, 1999). Requiring students to complete community service also does not guarantee a positive experience for all involved. Some students will meet and exceed a service learning requirement, while others will exhibit apathy and resistance (Finney, 1997). Many service projects are quite detached from community and sterile in purpose. Moore and Sandholtz observed that "some programs appear to incorporate service learning in name only, resulting in little service or learning" (p. 482). An effective service learning program is much more challenging than setting up agencies for students to work with as volunteers (Moore & Sandholtz, 1999). Finney (1987) commented that a service learning program has the potential to be successful if it is given the same support, authority, consistency, and validity of the core curriculum. Otherwise, students view the service learning program as unnecessary and inconsequential, rather than an integral and poignant element of their education.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of students' apathy and disdain for the sixty-hour service learning graduation requirement, a review of records for last year's senior class in fulfilling this obligation was completed as baseline data. School policy mandated that the service learning requirement be completed at the end of first semester of senior year. If the service was not on time, a policy was enforced that resulted in the removal of school privileges (e.g., senior prom, senior skip day, and other special events). Finally, any student that did not complete her service requirement was denied the privilege of graduation.

An analysis of students' past anecdotal service records and a student pretest survey revealed that students did not believe that the school should mandate service hours as part of the graduation requirements. Of the 236 students in last year's senior class at the targeted site, 173 had not completed the service requirement by the end of first semester (as stated in the student handbook). A summary of the number of students with service hours less than expected or the required journal is presented in Figure 2.1 (p. 11).

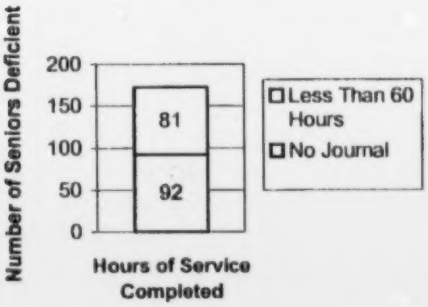

Figure 2.1 Number of seniors deficient and the hours of service provided for January 2002

Of the 173 students that did not complete the service requirement on time, 34% finished a minimum of 60 hours, but were missing the journal. In respect to hours, 92 of the 173 seniors were deficient in hours with 73% completing less than 30 hours. Two months later, 116 of the 236 students still had not fulfilled the service requirement. A summary of the number of students deficient in service hours or the required journal is presented in Figure 2.2.

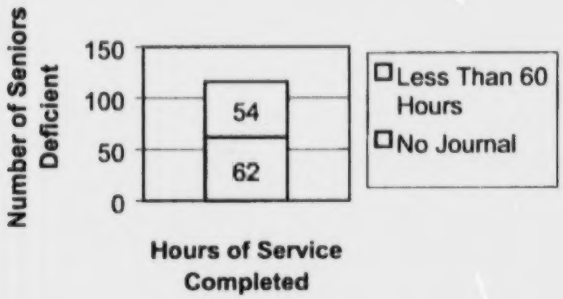

Figure 2.2 Number of seniors deficient and the hours of service provided for March 2002

Of the 116 students who did not complete the service requirement by March 2002, 28% completed a minimum of 60 hours, but were missing the journal. As the policy of removing

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senior privileges was enacted, 54 of the 120 seniors were documented as having less than expected service hours.

A review of surveys documenting students' service and conducted two years ago for the targeted site suggested that the number of hours required for service should be lowered or eliminated in total. A summary of the program revisions based on this finding is presented in Table 2.1 and 2.2.

Table 2.1

Suggestions for Service Program Revisions Based on Surveys for the Class of 2001

Suggestion	Number of Responses	Percent of Students Sampled
Number of Hours	9	.20
Low Attendance at Projects	6	.14
Too Many Forms	6	.14
More Variety	6	.14
Too Many Restrictions	5	.11
More Reminders	4	.09
Vary Locations	4	.09

The class of 2001, as represented in Table 2.1, most often listed number of hours required in the service program as their suggestion for revision at 20%.

Table 2.2

Suggestions for Service Program Revision Surveys for the Class of 2004

Suggestion	Number of Responses	Percent of Students Sampled
Number of Hours	5	.31
Too Many Restrictions	5	.31
More Variety	3	.19
More Reminders	2	.13
No Journal	1	.06

The class of 2004, as represented in Table 2.2, also listed the number of hours as their greatest suggestion for revision at 31%.

The results of students' survey pretest (conducted the first week of the study and noted in Table 2.3) demonstrated a similar theme of students' disdain for the service program.

Table 2.3

Level of Student Agreement and Suggestions Based on Pre-Intervention Survey September 2002

Suggestion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Service Learning should be part of school curriculum	0	18	16	5
Service Learning is more meaningful if I talk about it in class	1	16	20	2
Service Learning should be a graduation requirement	3	11	16	9

Of the 39 students surveyed at the targeted site, 21 students believed that service learning should not be part of the curriculum, and 22 students believed that service learning was no more meaningful if discussed in class. The results also noted that 64% of the students surveyed thought that service learning should not be a graduation requirement.

Probable Causes

A review of the literature revealed several underlying causes for adolescent apathy toward service learning. Research points to the role the administration plays in developing an effective service learning program. Black (1997) and Hepburn (1997) both referenced the argument that the administration should not make community service a requirement for it is then no longer voluntary. While Conrad and Hedin (1991) suggested that administrators ought to support service learning, it is only with the understanding that service learning students may attain the same general knowledge as those students in traditional classes. Some administrators opted out of a service learning requirement due to the added stress and work it entailed (Harrison, 1987). Masucci and Renner (2001) agreed that administrators need to put forth the extra effort when developing a service learning program to properly in-service teachers in this methodology.

The researchers in this field also suggest that teacher concern may determine the success of a service learning program. Teachers already burdened with the pressure to complete lesson plans and other school requirements, find service learning to be too much (Black, 1997). Harrison (1987) and Pasi (1997) also revealed that teacher objections to a service learning program may stem from their desire not to increase their work load. Masucci and Renner (2001) noted the challenge for teachers to implement service learning in a day filled with large classes,

lots of paper work, and testing that already takes away class time. The organization, preparation, and scheduling required of service learning makes it challenging to do well. Siegel (1997) stated that service learning requires time, creativity, and flexibility. The challenge for teachers lie in time constraints, managing large groups of students, transportation needs, funding for supplies, and lack of support from administration and parents. Shumer (1997) warned teachers that the shorter the length of duration, the less effective the service learning experience. Hence, teachers need to set aside a large amount of time for service learning to be beneficial. Hill and Pope (1997) explored the pressure teachers feel to teach to exams so students can earn better grades for college. This kind of thinking may lead a service learning program in the wrong direction. Cairn and Cairn (1999) cautioned teachers not to over-assess service learning as it will shift the focus from community to grades.

Schools intent on incorporating a service learning requirement must make strong connections to the curriculum (Burns, 1998). That is the key difference between service learning and community service. Shumer (1997) believed that schools should not require service learning programs simply because service is important. Schools must thread service learning throughout the curriculum to make it more meaningful. Hill and Pope (1997) also noted that service learning is not the same as community service. Service learning requires a curricular connection to the service component.

There is more to service learning than establishing curricular connections. Masucci and Renner (2001) distinguished that service learning requires a connection to the curriculum, a link to society, and a greater understanding of the underlying societal issues at hand. They added that service learning hopes to challenge and change the way things are rather than reinforce the structures in place through disconnected service projects. Kahne and Westheimer (1996) agreed

that service must emphasize change, not charity. Service as change builds a reciprocal relationship between the students and the communities where they work together, learn from each other, and share their gifts. Lisman (1998) argued that the challenge of service learning is a paradigm shift from the importance of individual success to the importance of building up a community. Other factors are as important as the curricular connections to service learning. Moore and Sandholtz (1999) claimed that service learning programs fail when strong curriculum connections are not apparent or when the service project is ineffective or inappropriate. Sipe (2001) argued that not only should service be connected to the curriculum, but also without in-depth, on-going reflection the activity has no meaning.

A review of the literature suggested that adolescent concerns may also factor in to the success of a service learning program. While Kahne and Westheimer (1996) proposed that service learning might help counter society's perceptions of adolescents as self-involved, adolescents bring much more to this equation. Harrison (1987) agreed adolescents are viewed as self-absorbed. Without a connection to service and community, these adolescents may evolve into disconnected adults. Dass and Gorman (1985) believed that adolescents might feel overwhelmed with the enormity of problems in the world. Students may question their ability to make any impact or may feel anxiety in unfamiliar roles and settings. To counter this, Battistoni (1997) noted the importance of finding an appropriate service activity that matches the skills and abilities of each adolescent. Harrison (1987) argued that adolescents need guidance when becoming involved in service because they do not always understand the community's needs and how it matches their own abilities.

Adolescents require a considerable amount of adult guidance and understanding throughout the service learning process. Sipe (2001) warned that adolescents may go into

service learning expecting appreciation and recognition for their work. This may set the students up for disappointment and disillusionment. Adolescent indifference may settle in and determine the outcome of service activities. Conrad and Hedin (1991) argued the apathetic nature of adolescents often drives them away from getting involved as citizens of the community. Hill and Pope (1997) believed that it might be difficult for high school students to find meaning in school work when their own lives are filled with challenging life circumstances. Apathy may also result from adolescent frustrations. Black (1997) remarked that adolescent indifference toward service learning is a form of rebellion against yet another project to do. Boyte (1991) deemed student apathy as merely a reflection of their frustration and anger with adults unwilling to get involved in the problems of society. Wade (1997) argued that apathy may not be as much of a challenge to service learning as that of the hidden curriculum in school. Wade pointed to the hidden curriculum of schools as counteractive to the lessons of service learning. In school students are challenged to compete, obey authority, and work individually. Students may be confused when service learning is introduced and it teaches the opposite of the lessons they have been learning all along.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Researchers in education point to a number of possible solutions in making service learning more meaningful including student reflection, collaboration, and connection to the curriculum. From the possibilities presented in this section, it is feasible to consider how the roles of teachers and students, as well as reflection, and curricular connections, can enhance service learning at the targeted site. Given this, student reflection, student leadership, teacher leadership, authentic experience, collaboration, and curricular connections were selected as interventions for the study conducted. An overview of the literature is supportive of this decision and outlining other possible solutions next followed by a review of the objectives, processes, plans, and methods for the study conducted.

Student Reflection

The most common solution strategy for an effective service learning program is reflection. Conrad and Hedin (1991) emphasized the need to allow time for reflection and class sharing. Harrison (1987) agreed that service learning projects, whether at school or in the community, must incorporate time for classroom discussion and personal reflection. Opportunities to process the service learning activities continuously throughout the process allow

the teacher and students to see growth and development. Pasi (1997) focused on the importance of reflection through daily insights offered by the students and weekly seminars to discuss service experiences.

Student Leadership

Students are encouraged to take on leadership roles in the service learning process (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996). Cairn and Cairn (1999) emphasized the importance of students' input in selecting their service sites. Students can take the responsibility of planning and carrying out service projects (Harrison, 1987). Students' voices must be heard (Klopp, Toole, & Toole, 2001) and students' talents should be considered when determining the experience (Lisman, 1998).

Teacher Leadership

Along with student leaders, service learning can only be effective with strong teachers who encourage imagination and collaboration (Battistoni, 1997). Campolo (1983) reported the necessity of a strong, excited leader to energize the students and the service learning project. Schine (1997) encouraged teachers to guide students in setting realistic and age appropriate goals for the project. This can only be accomplished when teachers are trained in the methodology of service learning (Finney, 1997).

Authentic Experience

Kirby (1989) described that it is essential for an effective service learning program to meet a community need and present authentic challenges. Cummings and Winston (1998) suggested consulting the community prior to any service learning experience. By asking students to point out the needs of their community (Edwards, 2001) or by allowing the community to define its own needs (Klopp, Toole, & Toole, 2001), the result may be a more

authentic experience for all involved. Both Sipe (2001) and Carver (1997) noted that successful service learning includes a meaningful, real experience.

Collaboration

Collaboration and relationship are key components to any service learning project (Abernathy & Obenchain, 2001). Wade (1997) recognized the empowerment which comes from service learning when it is not simply charity work. Students should work along side community members toward a common goal of helping one another. Kirby (1989) agreed that an effective service learning program should build collaborative relationships with the community. The most important aspect of service learning is the social interaction (Dass & Gorman, 1985). It is this connection with people that influences the way service learning impacts the students (Moore & Sandholtz, 1999).

Connection to Curriculum

Organization and a clear connection to classroom outcomes may lead to powerful service learning experiences. Harrison (1987) commented on the importance of well-organized projects with clear program goals. Schaffer, Berman, Pickeral, and Holman (2001) viewed service learning as intricate to the curriculum, not an extra task for students. Service learning should be utilized in all grades so that it will be reinforced continuously. Sipe (2001) and Schine (1997) noted the necessity to connect service learning with the classroom curriculum. As an intricate part of the classroom experience, Finney (1997) believed that service learning should be given the same school support as core classes.

The opportunity for meaningful service learning may occur when these solution strategies are considered and implemented. These guidelines should inform and direct any school that wishes to incorporate service learning.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of integrating service learning into the curriculum, during the period of September through December 2002, students in the targeted high school classes will increase their interest and level of investment in the community service graduation requirement as measured through document analysis, surveys, and self-reflection.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following procedures were necessary:

1. Instruction in social justice principles, theory, and social problems.
2. A community needs assessment and students' skills inventory.
3. Weekly opportunities for class discussions and reflections.

Project Action Plan

Week One

- Sent parent letter home
- Completed Document Analysis Form (Appendix A)
- Administered Student Survey (Appendix B)
- Created lesson plan for justice
- Implemented lesson activities on justice

Week Two

- Introduced methodology of service learning
- Introduced "P B& J Friday" (Peace Believes in Justice) – Weekly opportunity for class discussion and reflection
- Administered Community Connections Reflection Prompt (Appendix C)

Week Three

- Created lesson plan on collaboration
- Implemented lesson activities on collaboration
- Implemented Classroom Consensus activity
- Administered Classroom Consensus Journal Reflection Prompt (Appendix C)
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Four

- Created lesson plan on social justice
- Implemented lesson activities on social justice
- Implemented Reality Check activity
- Administered Reality Check Journal Reflection Prompt (Appendix C)
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Five

- Created lesson plan on AIDS awareness (connecting with AIDS Walk)
- Implemented lesson activities on AIDS awareness
- Implemented Decision-Making activity
- Administered Decision-Making Journal Reflection Prompt (Appendix C)
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Six

- Organized the logistics of the service learning project (transportation, permission forms, school approval, agency concerns, etc.)
- Created lesson plan on harmony building
- Implemented lesson activities on harmony building

- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Seven

- Discussed details of service learning experience
- Created lesson plan on charity versus change
- Implemented lesson activities on charity versus change
- Implemented Dedication activity
- Administered Dedication Journal Reflection Prompt (Appendix C)
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Eight

- Created lesson plan on the homeless
- Implemented lesson activities on the homeless
- Collected service learning activity permission forms
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Nine

- Implemented service learning project

Week Ten

- Administered Service Project Evaluation Journal Reflection Prompt (Appendix C)
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Eleven

- Recognition and celebration of students' efforts

Week Twelve

- Created lesson plans for hunger awareness (connecting with school Hunger Awareness Week)

- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Thirteen

- Implemented lesson activities on hunger awareness
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Fourteen

- Created lesson plan on literacy and education
- Implemented lesson activities on literacy and education
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Fifteen

- Created project to make connection between poverty and education (connecting with holiday collection school project)
- Implemented project
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection

Week Sixteen

- Wrap-up and evaluation
- Redistributed Student Survey (Appendix B)
- Opportunity for class discussion and reflection
- Revisited Document Analysis Form (Appendix A)

Methods of Assessment

To document the possible effects of interventions and changes in students' attitudes toward service the following methods of assessment were used: document analysis, surveys, and journals. A document analysis of existing school records involved reviewing the number of students' service hours and the type of agencies where service was completed. A survey was

administered to students to document perceptions of service learning. Journals assisted in understanding changes in students' reflections on service learning.

Student Survey

The student survey included ten questions with four possible solutions each regarding students' perceptions of service learning. The surveys were administered by the researcher to 60 students at the targeted high school during the first two weeks of September and again during the end of the study in December. The researcher distributed the survey in person and instructed the students to complete their responses. The survey was designed to assist the researcher with understanding the possible effects of interventions and changes in students' attitudes toward service learning.

Journal

The journals were divided into a six-part series of questions designed to focus students' thoughts on service learning. The researcher administered the prompts to 80 participants at the targeted high school throughout the study that began in September. The researcher distributed the prompts in class and instructed participants to complete responses. The journal reflection prompts were designed to assist the researcher with understanding the possible effects of interventions and changes in students' attitudes toward service learning.

Document Analysis

A document analysis form was used by the researcher to record the number of service hours completed by participants in the targeted high school during the months of September and December. The researcher used the form to review existing school records concerning service hours completed (Historical Review) and recorded the number of service hours for the 60 participants (Current Review). The researcher also noted the type of agencies where the service

was completed. The document analysis form was designed to assist the researcher with analyzing the possible effects of interventions regarding students' service learning.

To preserve anonymity throughout the data collection, the researcher assigned a letter code to each participant and omitted any reference to actual names. The results were stored in a locked file cabinet located in the researcher's school office.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase the interest and level of investment in the community service graduation requirement at the targeted high school. The implementation of service learning into the curriculum was selected to effect the desired changes.

Each Friday (known as PB&J or Peace Believes in Justice) students were provided opportunities to explore community concerns and reflect on the role these played in developing possible solutions for and issues related to service. Service learning was used as an instructional technique to connect lessons learned in the classroom and to practically apply these strategies within the context of the greater community. The concept of service learning was introduced through class discussions and activities that involved students in questioning their own values and responsibilities as a global citizen. Original plans included utilizing class time every Friday for planning purposes. However, calendar conflicts required moving time for reflection during different periods of the week. The development of students' service learning projects also took more time than initially planned and required schedule changes.

Three classes of World History students (n = 80) taught by the researcher participated in the service learning intervention throughout the sixteen-week project. While service learning

was the focus for all students, one of the three classes was selected as the target class and their journal reflections and surveys were examined throughout the process and provided the data analyzed in the following section. The three classes selected service projects that focused on the environment and children's issues, resulting in two neighborhood cleanup projects and hosting a holiday program for students with special needs.

During the second week of the service learning implementation, students were asked to reflect upon the hopes and concerns they have for their communities. Then, students went out into their neighborhoods to interview three people (a family member, a neighbor, and someone from a local grammar school or parish) and inquired about their hopes and concerns for the community. Students returned the following week to present their findings to the class. All hopes and concerns were listed on the board and later categorized under more general headings.

During the third week of the service learning intervention, students reviewed the list of community hopes and concerns to decide the focus of their project. A class discussion helped eliminate some of the more dangerous topics such as gangs, drugs, and violence. Then students were allowed to voice their ideas for possible projects that could be associated with each of the neighborhood hopes and concerns. Once everyone shared their ideas, students took a vote to choose the area of focus for the service learning project. Students then went back into their communities to find agencies or programs that the class could work with in the development of this project. Students' ideas were once again brought back to class and filtered by peers through suggestions offered in order to select the service learning project students wished to participate in. Students were responsible for making contact with the neighborhood agency to organize the logistics of the service learning project.

Once service learning implementation had been completed and the project carried out, students were asked to reflect upon the entire process. Students provided valuable insight into what aspects of the service learning implementation should be kept or altered for next year. Just as in the first week of the service learning implementation (Table 2.3, p. 13), students were then surveyed to determine whether or not the level of interest and investment had risen possibly due to the intervention. Also, during the last week of the service learning implementation, students' files were examined to verify the number of service hours completed during the first semester of their sophomore year.

Participants in the service learning implementation have applied their experiences from the service project first semester as students continued to explore the service learning area of focus. Students researched the topics of environmental problems and children's issues throughout the world and wrote a paper on the findings of this investigation.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

Table 4.1 (p. 30) shows how students and community members ranked their hopes and concerns for their neighborhood. Students ranked harmonious relationships as the most important hope for their community. Community members ranked harmonious relationships and safety as most vital. While not ranked under community concerns, students were worried that people in students' neighborhoods were ignorant to the problems in the world. Community members also feared that negative influences impacted the children, as well as the effect of economic and political instability on the neighborhood. Throughout the service learning process, students found it interesting that it did not seem to matter what neighborhood the students surveyed, most people generally wanted the same thing for their community.

Table 4.1

Student and Community Hopes and Concerns

Students		Community	
Hopes	Concerns	Hopes	Concerns
Peaceful Relations	Racism and Discrimination	Community Collaboration	Violence and Drugs/Gangs
Community Collaboration	Violence and Drugs/ Gangs	Safety	Racism and Discrimination
Safety	Disrespect	Neighborhood Activities for Kids	Negative Influences on Kids
Clean Environment	Pollution	Economic and Political Stability	Pollution
	Ignorance of Global Concerns	Peaceful Relations	Economic and Political Stability

Table 4.2 (p. 31) lists the reasons students cited for choosing a particular area of service learning to focus on for the students' project. The consensus vote process appeared to be the decisive factor in choosing the focus of the service learning project. Project feasibility influenced students' decisions as students looked to scheduling concerns, safety issues, and the ability of adolescents to make an impact in the community. Personal interest in a particular area also guided students in their decision-making. Students often selected areas of service that tapped into students' interests or were unfamiliar and novel experiences for the students. The desire to help local communities, the chances for project success, and time and safety issues all factored in to the students' choice for selecting a particular service learning project.

Table 4.2

Influences on Students' Decision to Choose Area of Service Learning

Reflection	Number of Responses	Percent of Students Sampled
Class Vote	8	.31
Feasibility	7	.27
Personal Interest	4	.15
Helping Communities	3	.12
Success of Project	2	.08
Time Investment	1	.04
Personal Safety	1	.04

After reflecting on the service learning process from beginning to end, the majority of students believed they had made a difference in the community. Students perceived their service efforts as well received within the community and viewed their contributions to the service site as positive. One-fifth of the students enjoyed opportunities to collaborate with one another throughout the development of the program. Over the sixteen-week implementation process, students worked together to seek out, design, and execute the service learning project. Collaboration during this process appeared to be more authentic as students discussed and developed strategies outside of the traditional classroom setting. The third most common response reported by participants was that the service learning process was "a great learning experience." Students' responses are perhaps due in part to the break from traditional teaching methods to an experiential curriculum focused on real-world application.

Table 4.3

Positive Reflections of Service Learning Implementation by Targeted Class

Reflection	Number of Responses	Percent of Students Sampled
Made a difference in our community	16	.39
Collaboration/Team Work	8	.20
Great Learning Experience	7	.17

Table 4.3 provides a summary of the positive aspects students listed in their journal reflections, while Table 4.4 presents the negative facets of the service learning implementation. Negative student reflections focused primarily on the service learning project itself. Nearly one-quarter of the students found the work to be tiring. The other two concerns focused on scheduling issues and less then ideal weather conditions. Students suggested that task variety and more time for breaks could have made the work less exhausting. Scheduling concerns and weather conditions were beyond the researcher's control and students were required to adapt to the project challenges as needed.

Table 4.4

Negative Reflections of Service Learning Implementation by Targeted Class

Reflection	Number of Responses	Percent of Students Sampled
Work was tiring	6	.24
Scheduling Concerns	5	.20
Weather Conditions	5	.20

Students also took time to reflect on the new insights they now had on service learning after participating in the implementation. While a variety of answers were given, most students commented on the four areas listed below in Table 4.5. Students reflected that service learning is most effective when completed in groups. Also, students' ability and desire to collaborate on a service learning project appeared to increase their investment and interest level in the project. These results may explain some of the prior resistance to a service learning graduation requirement given that students previously completed the project as individuals. Students also pointed to the fun of service learning, the ability to get to know their peers better, and the chance to explore an area of service that students had not experienced before as outcomes to the intervention. Service learning as presented appeared to provide students with enjoyable experiences of peer interaction in the context of neighborhood concerns unfamiliar to them before.

Table 4.5

Insights on Service Learning Implementation by Targeted Class

Reflection	Number of Responses	Percent of Students Sampled
Service Learning is best when done in groups	14	.48
Service Learning can be fun	3	.10
Got to know my classmates better	3	.10
First time experiencing this area of service	3	.10

Postsurvey results demonstrated a marked difference in students' attitudes toward service learning as noted in Table 4.6. Of the 39 students surveyed at the targeted site, 28 students thought that service learning should be part of the school's curriculum. This is a 26% increase from presurvey results. Thirty-one students believed that service learning was more meaningful when discussed in class, resulting in a 35% increase from pre-survey results. Class discussions were impacted the most by the service learning intervention. Students found greater meaning in service activities when classroom time was allotted to process service experiences. Finally, the results noted that 46% of the students surveyed agreed that service learning should be a graduation requirement, which was up 10% from the first survey.

Table 4.6

Level of Student Agreement and Suggestions Based on Post-Intervention Survey December 2002

Suggestion	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Service Learning should be part of school curriculum	6	22	7	4
Service Learning is more meaningful if I talk about it in class	8	23	7	1
Service Learning should be a graduation requirement	5	13	14	7

Figure 4.7 (p. 35) illustrates the average number of hours the targeted sophomore class completed in one semester as compared to the hours completed by a sophomore class the year before within that same time period. As noted in Figure 4.7 the targeted class completed an

average of 33.1 service hours during first semester of sophomore year. The number of hours completed is higher than the 18.7 from a previous class which were reviewed using the same time schedule. However, the 10 hours of service earned for the planning and implementation of participants' project may influence the results.

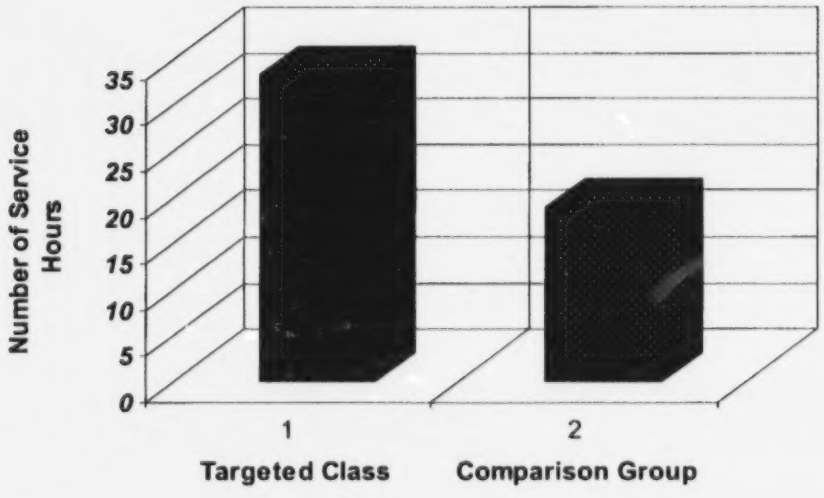

Figure 4.7 Number of service hours for the targeted class as compared to previous year students

Figure 4.8 (p. 36) presents a comparison of the two classes without the additional 10 service hours received by participants for the intervention. The targeted class completed 24.5 hours of service learning on average, without the addition of the ten hours earned for completing the service learning project. The 24.5 average is still greater than the 18.7 hours recorded by the prior class during the same given period. This may demonstrate an increase in the overall level of students' investment and interest in service projects during the service learning implementation.

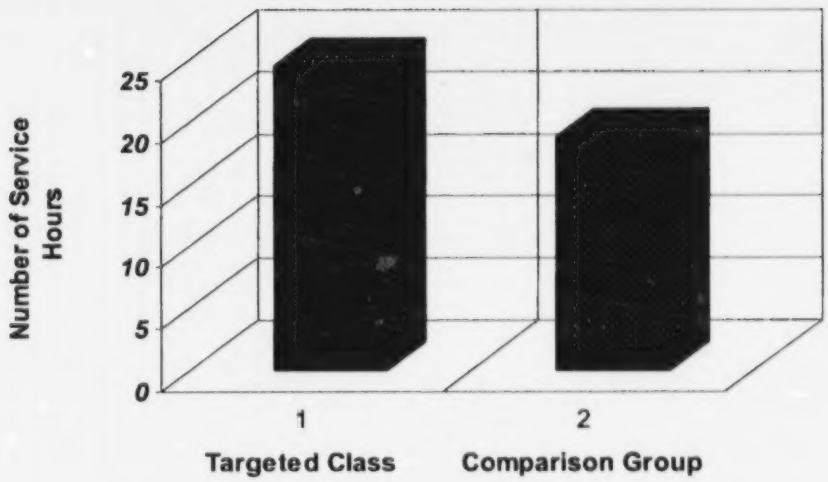

Figure 4.8 Number of service hours for the targeted class as compared to previous year students without the inclusion of intervention hours

Conclusions and Recommendations

The service learning intervention appeared to have had a positive effect on the targeted behaviors. An analysis of the data collected demonstrated a strong connection between the incorporation of service learning in the classroom and the increase of students' investment and interest in a service graduation requirement.

Experiential learning is an effective method to reinforce students' understanding of the classroom curriculum. The researcher will continue to incorporate service learning in the classroom despite all of the challenges. The benefits for students far outweigh the difficulties encountered by the teacher. Students enjoyed the sense of responsibility and ownership they experienced with the service learning project. At the end of the study, students commented on

missing the weekly reflections and the desire to begin a new service learning project second semester. Students' enthusiasm has appeared to bring more understanding to the need for a service graduation requirement. While the entire service learning process worked well in the classroom, in the future there will need to be stronger ties to social concerns throughout history and the experiences of those individuals who have tried to address these issues.

The purpose of this study was to help uncover ways to increase student investment in the service learning graduation requirement at the targeted high school. As the Service Program Coordinator at the targeted high school, these findings have major professional implications and have given the researcher a new direction for the school's service program. The slight increase in students' agreement with this graduation outcome was of particular importance to the researcher. These results show several positive changes in students' level of interest and investment in the service program. The school is moving from the promotion of disconnected community service projects to a more integrated service learning focus. With the support of the school's administration, the researcher and staff has pledged to be more intentional in teaching faculty how to incorporate service learning into the curriculum. Part of this process will include the researcher's assistance in the development of service learning curricula for all disciplines in this school setting. When students are exposed to the rich experiences of service learning, students often want it incorporated in all school subjects.

As researchers in this field have noted, student leadership and reflection are the most important components to a solid service learning experience. However, there needs to be more research in the area of administrative and faculty support and resources when developing a service learning curriculum. Additional assistance in the creation of lesson plans is essential,

especially to those teachers trying to incorporate service learning in their classrooms for the first time.

The research presented in this paper will be the basis for further exploration in the field of service learning. The researcher will be working with the state's Board of Education to assist schools in the development of their service learning programs. One goal is to take this research and present these findings at future educational conferences both locally and nationally. The ultimate goal of this research, however, is to inform and support educators that wish to integrate service learning into their classroom instruction.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Document Analysis Form

_____ Historical Review

_____ Current Review

Participant # _____

A. Number of service hours completed prior to sophomore year _____

B. Number of service hours completed by the end of the study _____.

C. Agencies where service was completed

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Appendix B

Student Survey

Circle one response for each of the following ten items.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Service Learning makes me a more responsible person.	1	2	3	4
2. Service Learning prepares me for the real world.	1	2	3	4
3. Service Learning has no influence on my actions.	1	2	3	4
4. Service Learning makes me anxious.	1	2	3	4
5. Service Learning has increased my community involvement.	1	2	3	4
6. Service Learning should be part of school curriculum.	1	2	3	4
7. Service Learning is more meaningful if I talk about it in a class.	1	2	3	4
8. Service Learning makes me a better problem solver.	1	2	3	4
9. Service Learning makes me a better person.	1	2	3	4
10. Service Learning should be a graduation requirement.	1	2	3	4

Appendix C

Journal Reflection Prompts

Part I. Community Connections

Please respond to each of the following prompts.

A. What hopes (wishes) do you have for your community?
B. What concerns (worries) do you have for your community?
C. What talents and skills do you possess?

Part II. Classroom Consensus

Please respond to each of the following prompts.

A. Reflecting on this activity, what was interesting about the process?
B. Did you find any of the responses to be surprising?
C. Are you pleased with the needs we have identified?
D. How much did you participate in the discussion?

Part III. Reality Check

Please respond to the following prompts.

A. Reflecting on the feasibility of the service project, how did we gather information?
B. How challenging was this activity?
C. What influenced our final decision?
D. How much did you participate?
E. Are you satisfied with the direction of this project?

Part IV. Decision-Making

Please respond to each of the following prompts.

A. What was surprising about the common strengths?
B. Describe your thinking when we matched needs with strengths.
C. How do you feel about the work you have done?
D. What do you think we will need to learn to help this project succeed?

Part V. Dedication

Please respond to each of the following prompts.

A. What do you hope to bring to this project?
B. What do you hope to learn from this experience?
C. What do you think will challenge you the most during this project?

Part VI. Service Project Evaluation

Please respond to each of the following prompts.

A. What did you bring to this project?
B. What did you learn from this experience?
C. What was the most challenging?
D. What was the most rewarding?

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